

**National Park Service  
Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program  
Application for Assistance**

**APPLICANT INFORMATION**

**Project Name:** The Great California Delta Trail (Delta Trail)

**Project Location:** Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta region (Delta) including portions of Sacramento, Yolo, Solano, Contra Costa and San Joaquin counties, and cities within Delta counties.  
Congressional Districts: 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 18th  
(See Attachment A. Congressional Representatives in Delta)

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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**1. Project Goals**

When it is complete the Delta Trail network will consist of approximately 1000 miles of trails. The primary goals of the Delta Trail—as defined in Senate Bill 1556 (Torlakson)—are to:

- Establish a recreation network, including bicycle and hiking trails, around the Delta
- Provide facilities to meet unmet recreational needs in the delta region.
- To provide an important link between the people of California and one of our most precious natural resources, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.
- Connect the delta region with adjacent areas, by providing a great link between our fascinating delta legacy communities and foster a connection between our rich histories and present challenges.
- Provide public access to the unique natural resources of the California Delta region.
- Provide needed outdoor recreation as a way of addressing childhood obesity.
- Complete missing links and provide connectivity in the regional trail system. One important example is to provide a link between the San Francisco Bay Trail termini in Benicia and Martinez and planned Sacramento River trails in Yolo and Sacramento counties, which would provide alternate transportation routes for bikes and other modes of trail friendly travel from San Jose to Sacramento on the linked trail systems. Link the San Francisco Bay Trail system and the planned Sacramento River trails in Yolo and Sacramento Counties to the present and future trailways around the delta, including, but

not limited to, the delta's shorelines in Contra Costa, San Joaquin, Solano, Sacramento, and Yolo Counties.

- Connect to existing and planned public transit in and around the Delta.
- Establish a network of approximately 1000 miles of multi-use trails, the nature of which will reflect local land use goals and provide that designated environmentally sensitive areas, including wildlife habitats and wetlands, will not be adversely affected by the trail.

The Delta Protection Commission's role in the creation of the Delta Trail—as mandated by SB 1556—is to develop and adopt a plan and implementation program, including a finance and maintenance plan, for the Delta Trail. In order to fulfill this role, the Commission's goals are to:

- Assure a stakeholder-driven process by establishing a Stakeholder Advisory Committee that will include representation from groups interested in the environmental and ecological protection of the Delta, groups representing agricultural, environmental, private and other business uses of the Delta's land and water, and groups involved in bicycling, walking, boating, horseback riding, and other relevant recreational activities.
- Establish a cooperative working relationship with state and federal agencies, and all other cities, counties, districts, including school districts, regional government associations, and non-profits that will be affected by the proposed trail.
- Gather the information needed to determine a specific route for the Delta Trail to serve as a network through the Delta to be adopted by local Delta entities, including relevant planning documents such as land use master plans and trail master plans to identify existing and planned trails, parks and open space, and identify all existing trails and publicly owned land in the Delta region. Establish a GIS database using best management practices used by other regional trail project managers.
- Identify potential funding sources and secure funding for the planning of the trail.
- Create a plan that shows a specific route for the multi-use Delta trail that shows the relationship of the route to existing and proposed park and recreational facilities, land and water trail systems, and links to existing and proposed public transportation.
- Prepare the appropriate environmental documents required under the California Environmental Quality Act and other relevant mandates.

## **2. Important natural resources to be improved or protected, and/or recreation opportunities to be enhanced.**

“There are many threats to the Delta's future, but the greatest one is its invisibility.”

- Jane Wolff, *Delta Primer: a field guide to the California Delta*

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is a unique and valuable resource, spanning several counties in northern California at the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers. The delta receives runoff from over 40 percent of the State's watersheds, including flows from the Sacramento, San Joaquin, Mokelumne, Cosumnes and Calaveras rivers and Patch Creek. As an integral part of California's water system, it provides water to over twenty-three million Californians and irrigation to four million acres of farmland.

Unlike the San Francisco Bay, the Delta region is not well-known. Many more people benefit from it than know where it is or that it exists. Though the Delta region is currently undervalued as a natural resource, a system of trails that draws people into the Delta region

would increase the awareness of and appreciation for this uniquely beautiful and valuable landscape. (See attached Delta Fact Sheet)

There are many recreational activities that exist in the Delta. (See Attachment B. Recreational Facilities) However, there is no coordinated system of organization that links these activities. Currently, the primary way for visitors to go from one recreational activity to another is by driving, which results in each recreational facility having to provide sufficient parking facilities for full-capacity service. One of the benefits of the Delta Trail system is that it will make it possible to bike or hike between many recreational facilities, which would both reduce the need for parking facilities and enhance eco- and ag-tourism.

For a complete survey of the Delta's natural resources and recreational facilities, please see the following attached documents.

*Land Use and Resource Management Plan for the Primary Zone of the Delta*

As stipulated by the The Delta Protection Act of 1992, the Commission has prepared and adopted a comprehensive resource management plan for land uses within the Primary Zone of the Delta that sets forth a description of the needs and goals for the Delta and a statement of findings, policies, and recommendations in the areas of: environment; utilities and infrastructure; agriculture; water; recreation and access; levees; and marine patrol, boater education and safety programs.

*2006-2011 Delta Protection Commission Strategic Plan*

The Strategic Plan is a product of the Commission's visioning process and is meant to further the Commission's implementation of the Delta Protection Act and the Land Use and Resource Management Plan.

*State Parks Central Valley Vision*

The Central Valley Vision project began in early 2003 when the California State Parks Department perceived a serious lack of available recreational opportunities in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys, including the Delta. The assessment concluded that there are significant resource protection and recreational opportunities and programs in the Central Valley through which State Parks can better serve the needs of Central Valley residents and visitors.

### **3. Delta Trail Partners**

#### **Office of Senator Tom Torlakson**

Senator Torlakson, as the author of SB 1556, has committed to providing ongoing support for the trail including outreach activities, securing funding, and promoting related legislation and policy changes.

#### **Valley Vision**

As regional planning consultants to the DPC, Valley Vision (a non-profit) will implement an outreach plan that will involve interviewing stakeholders, forming partnerships, and engaging the Delta community in the Delta Trail planning process. (See attached Valley Vision proposal.)

### **Delta Protection Commission Members**

The 23-member Commission is comprised of landowners, Delta residents, and representatives from local, state and regional entities. (See Attachment C. DPC member roster.) Through their support of the Delta Trail, DPC staff will be able to establish contact with key decision makers, gather needed data from local and regional planning entities, and benefit from the knowledge that they have about their constituencies.

### **San Francisco Bay Trail**

The Bay Trail staff has already assisted the planning of the Delta Trail by providing several consultations with members of the DPC. Because the Bay Trail staff has over 20 years of experience of implementing a large-scale regional trail system, their technical assistance has and will be invaluable to the planning of the Delta Trail. To date, they have shared contact information, trail development literature and maps, and GIS database development guidance.

### **Other Partners**

Many other partners have expressed an interest in offering their support for the trail planning process or in linking to the trail, including: Bay Area Ridge Trail, California Coastal Conservancy, Mokelumne River Conservancy, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, City of Isleton, Friends of the Sacramento River Parkway, and California State Parks.

## **4. Delta Trail Support**

In 2006, the California Legislature passed, and the Governor signed, SB 1556 supporting the creation of a Delta trail network. (See Attachments D. SB 1556 and E. Supporters of Delta Trail.)

## **5. Request for RTCA Assistance**

- Provide trail planning experience and expertise to advise and assist in partnership development and community engagement.
- Provide technical assistance and best practices information on how to most effectively implement a trail planning process.
- Provide contact information for relevant stakeholders and decision makers.
- Use contacts within the NPS and other trail contacts to research trail systems and identify best management practices.
- Assist in gathering relevant planning documents such as land use master plans and trail master plans to identify existing and planned trails, parks and open space, conservation and ag easements for trail planning and development, and publicly owned land in the Delta region.
- Assist in developing a concept plan for the Delta Trail.

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

### **6. California Delta's Natural, Cultural, Historic, Scenic, and Outdoor Recreational Resources**

The California State Legislature in the Delta Protection Act of 1992 declared the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to be a natural resource of statewide, national, and international significance, containing irreplaceable agricultural, habitat and recreational

resources that need to be recognized, preserved, and protected for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations. The Delta includes approximately 738,000 acres of waterways, levees and farmed lands extending over portions of five counties: Solano, Yolo, Sacramento, San Joaquin and Contra Costa. The rich peat soil in the central Delta and the mineral soils in the higher elevations support a strong agricultural economy.

The Delta lands have access to the fresh waters of the 1,000 miles of rivers and sloughs lacing the region. These waterways provide habitat for many aquatic species and the uplands provide year-round and seasonal habitat for amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds, including several rare and endangered species. The Delta provides water to over 23 million Californians, making the Delta's waterways the single most important geographical feature of the state's water resources system. (See attached Delta Fact Sheet.)

Delta history is closely linked with the rich agricultural heritage of California. The patterns of settlement reflect the history of immigration into California in the late 19th century. The rural communities of the Delta reflect the diverse heritage of the Delta.

The Delta is extremely popular for water-oriented recreation including fishing, boating, and water-skiing, and resource-oriented recreation, such as fishing and hunting. Other popular activities include: camping, attending special events, bicycling, and sightseeing. A 1980 report prepared for Department of Water Resources estimated 12 million recreation days annually since 1977. Most of the existing recreational opportunities are provided by the many private marinas.

## **7. Connections to and enhancements of other natural/cultural/recreational resources**

The Delta Trail would seek to connect to and enhance as much as possible the natural, cultural, and recreational resources listed in Section 6 above. Much of what exists in the Delta is not connected, and the Delta Trail would provide a regional network of trails that would provide linkages between many of these resources. The trail will link to:

- Delta region parks and recreational facilities.
- Public transportation and transit, including bus stops, train stations, and ferry terminals.
- Land and water trail systems. Some examples include the San Francisco Bay Trail, Bay Area Ridge Trail, Sacramento Riverfront Parkway Trails, Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail, San Francisco Bay Area Water Trails and Delta Loop Water Trail.
- Ag- and Eco-tourist locations.

An important part of the planning process will be to identify the potential links.

## **8. Public Participation**

From April to June 2006, the Delta Protection Commission organized public meetings with members representing the four primary stakeholder groups in the Delta including: agricultural, recreation, private business, and local planning. These meetings provided an opportunity for stakeholders to express their views regarding Delta Trail opportunities and challenges. Information gathered at these meetings will be strongly considered during the planning process. (See Attachment F. Stakeholder Meeting Notes.) DPC and Valley Vision will continue efforts to engage the public in the planning process.

## **9. Delta Trail History, Prior Activities and Current Status**

**February 23, 2006:** SB 1556 creating The Great California Delta Trail was signed by Governor Schwarzenegger.

**Apr – June 2006:** Meetings with primary stakeholders. DPC contacts Valley Vision to submit a proposal to help facilitate the planning process. (See attached Valley Vision proposal.)

**June 2006:** DPC hires Delta Trail Project Manager to initiate preliminary planning activities and to help form partnerships.

**Current Activities:** DPC is actively seeking funding for the Delta Trail's planning and development phase, as well as engaging in networking activities with potential partners and supporters. Valley Vision will initiate phase I planning activities starting August 1, 2007 through January 30, 2008.

## **10. Status of Delta Trail Project and Current Challenges**

The greatest success of the Delta Trail project is that it has received strong support from a diverse and wide range of people and organizations. The excitement level is high for the trail and the possibilities that it offers.

Because the Delta Trail is regional in scale--involving five counties, three regions, and many diverse stakeholders--the greatest challenges to the project are:

- To secure the estimated \$4 million of funds that are needed to execute the planning and development phases of the project.
- To create a GIS database containing all the information needed to determine a specific route for the trail.
- To solidify effective partnerships with people and organizations that can provide the needed expertise and experience in planning regional trail projects.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

A. Congressional Representatives in the Delta's Primary and Secondary Zones

B. Existing Recreational Facilities in the Delta

C. Roster -- Delta Protection Commission

D. State Bill 1556 (Torlakson)

E. Supporters of Delta Trail

F. Delta Trail Stakeholder Meeting Notes

Delta Fact Sheet

California Delta Map of Primary and Secondary Zones

Valley Vision proposal

*Land Use and Resource Management Plan for the Primary Zone of the Delta*

*2006-2011 Delta Protection Commission Strategic Plan*

*State Parks Central Valley Vision*

Letter of support from Valley Vision